

Woolen Mills Chapel (Union Chapel, "Calvary
Baptist Church")
1819 East Market Street
Charlottesville
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1068

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WOOLEN MILLS CHAPEL (UNION CHAPEL, "CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH") HABS No. VA-1068

Location: 1819 East Market Street
Charlottesville
Virginia

Present Owner: Trustees of the Union Chapel of Charlottesville
Woolen Mills.

Present Use: Religious services and related activities of Calvary
Baptist Church.

Statement of Significance: This is a small, wooden church of Gothic style of the late nineteenth century. It exemplifies a vernacular style common in late nineteenth century residential and secular buildings. It is important as a feature of the Woolen Mills community, which contains many other fine examples of residential and industrial construction of the mid to late nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: On August 23, 1887, A.R. Blakey and G.V. Southall, acting as trustees for Julia and Thomas Parish, deeded Lot #18 on Woolen Mills Road to the Trustees of Woolen Mills Chapel, Robert Valentine, William Kelly, Charles Hoffman, Edward Lawman and H.C. Marchant, --- "to hold the same for the uses and purposes following to wit: for an Union Chapel or house of religious service or worship, open to all Protestant Religious denominations, and designed chiefly for the benefit of the operations and others connected with the Charlottesville Woolen Mills."

On February 10, 1891, Edward and Mary Lawman and Robert T. Allison deeded Lot #2 unto the Charlottesville Woolen Mills, Inc.

On August 26, 1957, the Charlottesville Woolen Mills deeded a lot designated Lot D to the Trustees of the Union Chapel of the Charlottesville Woolen Mills, T.J. Baltimore, E.M. Haggard and R.M. Herndon. The Union Chapel had used a lot fronting 115.3' on Woolen Mills Road, and known as Lot D. This lot is the southeastern portion of Lot 2 and the southern portion of Lot 18. Under this deed the Trustees of the Union Chapel conveyed Lot A

to the Charlottesville Woolen Mills. The Woolen Mills had occupied and used Lot A, being the remaining portion of Lot # 18 and the northeastern portion of Lot # 2.

2. Date of erection: 1887.
3. Architect: unknown.
Contractors: Boyd and Wash, Charlottesville.
4. Alterations and additions: The west portion of the church building was constructed in 1908 as an annex to the original chapel and tower. The original west end wall of the chapel was rebuilt with interior sliding windows between the annex and the chapel, allowing an enlarged congregation space (seating total 150). The basement area under the annex was excavated in 1965-1966 to include spaces for Sunday School facilities. At this time a stair was cut through the annex level to the basement. Partitions were also added within the annex to allow space for Sunday School classes. Rest rooms were installed in the pockets to either side of the west end vestibule. New lighting fixtures have been installed at various times replacing the original oil lamps. The original sanctuary exterior doors of the east end have been removed and replaced. In the east vestibule, to the right of the entrance, sliding doors have been removed. The organ has been recently enclosed by a wood paneled box screen.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Woolen Mills Chapel was first organized in the fall of 1886 across the street (to the southeast) from its present location, in the home of a Mrs. Humphries. Mr. W.H. Edwards, a member of First Methodist Church, served as the first Superintendent. Construction was begun on the building in 1887, and was paid for by public subscription. Much of the work on both the original chapel and tower, and on the annex, was completed by members of the Woolen Mills community.

One of the earliest recorded functions of the chapel was a Christmas Tree program held there on December 26, 1887. The consecration of the chapel took place on Sunday, May 13, 1888.

The chapel was begun as a non-denominational chapel to serve the community. Services were held by pastors from various churches within the Charlottesville area. The Woolen Mills Chapel was used primarily for Sunday School, mid-week services and revivals.

Below is a list of the Superintendents of the chapel up to 1938, after which date there are no records.

W.H. Edwards, 1886, member of First Methodist Church.

Robert Turner Allison, 1887 - 1897, Mill employee and member of First Baptist Church.

E.J. Harlow, 1898 - 1917, Mill employee and member of Christian Church.

E.M. Haggard, 1918 - 1930, member of University Baptist Church.
O.A. Gianniny, 1931 - 1935, member of First Methodist Church.
T.H. Tillman, 1936 - 1938, member of First Baptist Church.

Other than its use as a Union Chapel, the Woolen Mills Chapel has served as a temporary headquarters for organizing churches, such as the Mount View Baptist Church, now located in Belmont. Previous to that time, it had been used by the Charlottesville Pentecostal Holiness Congregation (1956 -). Since December 5, 1965, the chapel has been leased to the Calvary Baptist Church, which has been responsible for the additions to the basement and the other interior work.

The Woolen Mills Chapel was erected on land deeded by H.G. Marchant, founder and president of the Woolen Mills. The chapel is not sponsored by the Woolen Mills, but has become an important part of the fabric of the Woolen Mills Community. In 1865 H.G. Marchant's factory (Woolen Mills) was located about a mile from the "village" of Charlottesville. Prior to the Civil War, (approximately 1856), the factory was used as a cotton mill. It took its name from the war-time production of Confederate uniforms, and later, military uniforms.

The present access, East Market Street (Woolen Mills Road), was once known as "Three Notched Road", marked by chops on trees along its way. Thomas Jefferson traveled this route often, as it was the main road from Richmond to Monticello. The Blue Ridge and Rivanna Turnpike started west from this point to the foot of Afton Mountain. It is said that the present brick house to the east of the chapel, on the adjoining street corner, was a tavern frequented by Thomas Jefferson. At the point where "Three Notched Road" crossed Secretary's Ford, (named after Col. Carter, Colonial Secretary under George II), General Tarleton crossed the Rivanna in his attempt to capture Mr. Jefferson, then the Governor of Virginia, June 3 - 4, 1781. Other sources indicate that this road was on the route of General Philip Sheridan during his raids of March 3 - 6, 1865. General George A. Custer is said to have burned the Woolen Mills and the railroad bridge across the Rivanna.

Besides the remains of the original mill buildings, and the present factory buildings, the Woolen Mills community consists of several original brick and stone buildings once used for storage. The brick homes built for the mill employees along the river are still in use, as are the wooden frame houses and the large Foreman's house on the hill overlooking the chapel. The site map included in the drawings keys the locations of these structures.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

Rawlings, Mary, ed. Early Charlottesville - Recollections of
of James Alexander, 1823 - 1874, Charlottesville: The Michie

Company, 1942, pp. 16, 37, 43, 49.

Warwick, A.B. Reminiscences of Charlottesville, Charlottesville: Conway Printing Co., Inc., 1929.

Woods, Edgar. Albemarle County in Virginia, Bridgewater, Virginia: The Green Bookman, 1932, p. 63.

Deed Books: 88, p. 258; 95, p. 87; 336, pp. 95 - 97. County Clerk, Albemarle County, Virginia.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Charlottesville. N.Y., N.Y.: Sanborn Map Co., 1907 and 1920. G1463. C4S3.

Program of Easter Service, Woolen Mills Chapel, April 17, 1938.

"Daily Progress", excerpts from article, date inexact - 1965 -.

2. Interviews:

Mr. O.A. Gianniny, past Superintendent, Woolen Mills Chapel.

Mr. Roy Herndon, Trustee, Woolen Mills Chapel.

Rev. Harold Johnson, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a small, irregular plan Gothic church, with siding of heart pine. The tower is octagonal, shingle covered, tapering to a pinnacle.
2. Condition of fabric: Good, with some deterioration of blinds and louvers due to weathering.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original chapel is approximately 25 feet and six inches wide and 45 feet long. The tower measures nine feet across. The annex is 23 feet wide at its middle section, 29 feet wide across its west entry, and 34 feet long overall. The chapel measures 59 feet and six inches long overall along its south elevation. The front elevation, which measures 30 feet in height to the ridge line, contains one story with unused attic space above the ground level sanctuary. The tower stands approximately 48 feet high plus a spire of 5 feet.
2. Foundations: Fieldstone on the east, north and west elevations. South elevation foundation not visible.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: The structure is finished in heart pine weatherboard painted white. The east, north and west elevations are of coarse bricks above the stone foundations and below the first floor level.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood interior framing.
5. Chimneys: There were two flues in the chimneys in the original chapel for wood stoves. One chimney, at the north end, exists presently. There is a chimney on the north side of the annex over the oil furnace.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance of the original chapel opens into a small vestibule. The original exterior doors have been replaced by two six panel doors. There are two original double panel doors on the entrance of the west annex end. There are recently added doors to the basement on the east and north walls.
 - b. Windows and blinds: Wooden double - hung windows on the ground level have six over six light sash. They are framed by 5" fine moulding. Double - hung windows on the tower have two over two light sash, framed by 4" moulding. Double - hung windows set in the brick basement walls have six over six light sash. Double blinds are on the south and east elevation windows. Single blinds are on two of the three tower windows.
 - c. Miscellaneous openings: There are two small louvered openings on the west and south elevations for attic ventilation. There are five louvered openings in the bell tower and seven louvered dormer openings on the tower.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering, materials: The gable roof is of tin roofing.
 - b. Bell tower: The roof of the tower on the south elevation is of green shake shingle, with a flared skirt at the bottom edge, and placed in alternating bands of four rows of straight - cut edges and four rows of curved - cut edges, until the last band which consists of twelve rows of straight - cut edges.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: The basement, a recent addition under the annex, is entered from a door on the north wall. The basement area originally under the chapel is entered from a door on the east wall. This area was originally used for separate men's and women's Sunday School classes. A stair has recently been cut

through the annex. The spaces are partitioned into small areas for Sunday School facilities.

- b. Main level: The original chapel entrance leads into a small vestibule which steps up 5" into the sanctuary. This vestibule also leads to the left into the tower. The annex entrance leads into a vestibule on the west end of the building. This steps up 5" into the annex which has been partitioned into three areas. The annex steps down one step into the chapel.
 - c. Attic: Unfinished and reached by a trap door in the ceiling of the tower room.
- 2. Stairways: The single run interior stair goes along the south annex wall. It is not original. The balustrade has a simple rectangular post and rail.
 - 3. Seating: The wooden pews are arranged in rows on both sides of the single, center aisle. The ends of all the pews are enclosed by a wood panel with a curved upper edge (see Detail sheet), except for one row on the right side of the aisle against the back wall (see photo). This pew was added when the stove was removed from that corner, and probably replaced by a pew from the original basement room.
 - 4. Flooring: The original hardwood flooring is now covered by wall to wall carpeting.
 - 5. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster.
 - 6. Doorways and doors: There are double doors leading into the tower room off the main chapel vestibule. There are sliding window-doors in the altered wall joining the annex to the chapel. There are double panel doors leading into the annex from its west end vestibule. Other interior doors are in partitions recently added.
 - 7. Hardware: The front doors have brass handles. The hinges on the blinds are original. The hooks for oil lamps remain in the sanctuary ceiling.
 - 8. Lighting: There are hanging electric lamps in the sanctuary and recessed lights in the annex and in the basement areas.
 - 9. Heating: The chapel is heated by an oil furnace located in the basement.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The chapel faces south - southeast. The original church lot (# 18) contains the 1897 chapel. The later acquired lot (# 2) provided land for the 1908 annex. In front of the chapel is the Woolen Mills Foreman's house on a hill facing

northeast. The land behind the chapel contains two houses facing Riverside Street. The Calvary Baptist Church has purchased two lots to the west of the chapel. One of these lots fronts on East Market Street, and the second lot lies behind the first. These lots are used for parking and for gardening. Riverside Street slopes down to the Rivanna River to the east behind the chapel.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by Graduate Architecture students in the School of Architecture, University of Virginia.

Course: Vernacular Architecture, Fall 1973.

Professor: K. Edward Lay

Students: Nancy O. Elliot
T. Ricardo Quesada

The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.